

**Opening Remarks at the**  
**Chenoa Meeting on the Geneva Accord**  
**IDRC**  
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**International Development Research Centre (Canada)**

Welcome, everyone, to IDRC, and to the fifth meeting of the Chenoa Group. Chenoa is an Algonquin word which means dove of peace. Chenoa is an informal group which brings together representatives of CIDA, IDRC, and DFAIT as well as other departments working on peace and development in the Middle East. This group was set up to allow for brainstorming and greater collaboration among different institutions with similar interests.

It is a pleasure to see you all here, but we note one major absence: Jill Sinclair, DFAIT's Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process, who is now based in the Middle East. But she has made it very clear that she is keen on hearing about the outcome of the discussions. She has a very capable team in Ottawa whom we welcome here: Sam Hanson, Geoffrey Dean, and Aziz Mulay-Shah.

We are also happy to welcome our colleagues from CIDA, which is an important player in our collective work on the Middle East Peace Process. Welcome to Adele Shaughnessy, Program Manager.

Both CIDA and the Office of the Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process are our partners in the Expert and Advisory Services Fund — the EASF —, a project managed by IDRC and funded by CIDA, which supports research on the Palestinian refugee issue. In fact, we are going to have an informal meeting of most of the core members of the Consultative Committee of that project after this session.

We are also happy to have with us colleagues from the Department of Justice, the Department of National Defence, the Privy Council Office, and (*to be confirmed*) Citizenship and Immigration Canada. A very special welcome to Michael Bell and Michael Molloy whose expertise will be very useful to the discussions. Of course, we welcome our experts and academics, Rex Brynen, Atif Kubursi, John Sigler, and Elia Zureik. Regrettably, Janice Stein, our other usual suspect, had to cancel at the last minute.

The purpose of this meeting is to brainstorm about the Geneva Accord initiative. We will have a discussion about the overall process, its political implications, the public reaction to it, and how

Canada and other countries might respond to this initiative. We will also discuss in more detail the refugee component of this initiative, the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps, as well as ideas for follow-up on this issue. You will find on the side table Article 7 of the Accord on refugees.

As you know, Canada's Foreign Affairs minister has already indicated his support for the process of the Geneva Accord and noted how it complements the Road Map process. We also note that the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee and IDRC are considering bringing the authors of the Geneva Accord on a visit to Canada to generate public debate.

A quick word about how we will run the meeting. We have divided the meeting in two parts: The first to discuss the general process, the second to focus on the refugee issue.

We will first hear from our experts who will give us general comments about the Accord and their views on the refugee component. In the time that is left, we will have a Q&A session with our experts, followed by a general discussion that will deal with both the process itself and then the refugee component.

We hope that this will be beneficial to all of us. Based on the discussions today and the papers from our experts, IDRC will produce a paper analysing the refugee component of the Geneva Accord. The paper will be used as a basis for discussion at the next meeting of the (no-name) international donors' group on the Palestinian refugee issue.

Let's introduce ourselves now.

The bios for the members of our expert panel are available on the side table. I think that the panel members are already well known to you, so I will not give a long introduction. We start with Elia Zureik, who, because of his surname, is always last, but here he will go first:

Elia Zureik

John Sigler

Atif Kubursi

Rex Brynen

We will now go straight to the presentations.